ACANTHUS 7

An international newsletter to encourage interest in the Acanthaceae

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EDITORIAL

ACANTHUS lives!

Welcome back to Acanthus, the newsletter of the community of students and other fans of Acanthaceae. The purpose of the newsletter is to communicate about our shared interest in Acanthaceae, to post observations, to share data and/or plant materials and generally to stimulate advances in knowledge about our favorite plants.

We have agreed to serve as editors of the newsletter for a term of uncertain duration (we'll let you know when we tire of the task and wish to pass the torch). It is our hope that by taking full advantage of internet communication, the task will be relatively straight forward. We hope that most of you will find an electronic version of the newsletter to be acceptable (we fully anticipate have to experiment with formats, modes of electronic transfer, etc. before we get it exactly right). However, if you prefer to receive a hard copy of the newsletter by mail, please let us know and include the best address for you. Tom Daniel has agreed to help with mailing hard copies to those of us who prefer that medium

You will want to read the several articles in this issue (some were submitted some time ago; apologies to the authors). Take special note of "Upcoming Events that are in the works for the future. We would also like to ask that you please take a few minutes to peruse the list of recipients of the newsletter. Please help us to complete the information that we are lacking and advise us of any errors, additions, deletions, etc. that you notice.

Finally, we are seeking submissions for future issues, as well as ideas regarding the kinds of information that might be included.

Mandy-Jane Balkwill and **Lucinda McDade**

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Report on the International Botanical Congress, Report on the International Botanical Congress, St. Louis, August 1999

The IBC is held every 6 years and brings together a large and highly international group of plant scientists. Tom Daniel (California Academy of Sciences, USA) took the lead in organizing a lunchtime meeting of attendees at the 1999 congress with an interest in Acanthaceae. The meeting was very well attended and we ended up with standing room only in the small room allocated to us. The main topics of discussion were reactivating the ACANTHUS newsletter (as you know, Mandy Balkwill and Lucinda McDade agreed to attempt to do so) and having a meeting devoted to Acanthaceae. A number of formats were suggested for the latter. There was general agreement that, in addition to arranging sessions on Acanthaceae at regularly scheduled national and international meetings, we should organize a stand-alone conference in an acanth-rich venue (field trips!). Along these lines, two events are in the mill at present (see upcoming events). It was also agreed that "acanth lunch" should be a regular part of any meeting that brings together researchers who don't see each other on a daily basis; we must all take the lead, when appropriate, to make sure that this happens.

The IBC format included only invited oral presentations and posters (at meetings in the USA, it is customary to also have contributed oral presentations which facilitate wider participation). In the symposium on Lamiales organized by Dick Olmstead (U. Washington, USA), Robert Scotland (Oxford U.) presented a paper in which he summarized and reviewed recent advances in the higher level systematics of Acanthaceae. Recent molecular work has shown that the several large clades emerging from these studies are essentially the same as those that have been diagnosed by previous workers on the basis of various morphological data. Scotland's paper represented the first attempt since 1895 to publish a list of currently accepted genera in the form of a classification. This provisional scheme is intended to provide a focus for further research and sampling and as a work-in-progress classification. In the same session, Lucinda McDade (U. Arizona, USA) and Andrea Schwarzbach (Indiana University, USA) presented results of phylogenetic analysis of molecular and morphological data that indicate that Avicenniaceae are at least as closely related to Acanthaceae *sensu stricto* as are Thunbergioideae (= *Thunbergia, Mendoncia* and related small genera). One poster, by H. Q. Zhang and M. Sun (University of Hong Kong), described genetic diversity in *Avicennia ilicifolius*, the "mangrove thistle."

We propose that we think towards organizing an entire session on Acanthaceae at the next IBC. Volunteers to help coordinate?

Flowering Patterns In AcanthaceaeFlowering Patterns In Acanthaceae

John Wood
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Duncan Thomas' paper in ACANTHUS 6 drew attention to synchronously flowering Acanthaceae in tropical Africa. One of the genera he mentioned, *Mimulopsis*, is related to the Asian genus *Strobilanthes sensu lato*, where synchronous flowering has long been known but is still very poorly documented. Most of the papers describing this were published long ago in either *The Indian Forester* or *The Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* and refer only to India. More modern information, particularly from other Asian countries where *Strobilanthes* grows would add enormously to our knowledge of this phenomenon.

Duncan Thomas also mentioned the genus *Isoglossa*. This is clearly related to the neotropical genus *Stenostephanus*, in which should be induded *Habracanthus*, *Hansteinia* and possibly several other genera. However as far as I know synchronously flowering monocarpic Acanthaceae are unknown in the New World. It would be interesting to hear if anyone has observed or even suspected it in the neotropics, perhaps in the genus *Stenostephanus*.

However synchronous flowering is not the only point of interest in the flowering of Acanthaceae. My observation in various Asian, American and African countries would confirm the very predictable fact that Acanthaceae in dry country come into flower when it rains. A few species of *Ruellia* and *Stenandrium* are exceptionally sensitive and flower within a few days of the first rains. In contrast the pattern in moister areas with a 'monsoon' type climate is the reverse. Both in Bolivia and in the Himalayas Acanthaceae which grow in these areas flower almost exclusively in the dry (also colder) season. In Bhutan it was virtually impossible to find an Acanthaceae in flower in the May, June period at the onset of the monsoon except in the climbing genus *Thunbergia*. Late in winter many species and some complete genera, like *Eranthemum*, were just coming into flower.

I have no information about what happens in the true rainforests except that flowering appears to be erratic. This is probably not strictly the case as it seems quite likely that flowering is related to weather conditions in some way. Perhaps a dry period stimulates flowering some considerable time later.

Many of us must have casual observations about Acanthaceae flowering based on our field and herbarium work and I would be very interested to hear from anyone who has noticed anything.

Bakossi tea: *Dicliptera laxa* C.B.Clarke Bakossi tea: Dicliptera laxa C.B.Clarke

Martin Cheek & Martin Etuge

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The Acanthaceae, although such an important component of the world's flora, are not usually seen to be of economic importance to people, except as ornamental plants. In comparison families such as Labiatae are far more readily accepted as being of benefit to people in view of their use in flavouring foods, based on the production of the essential oils that characterise the family. This perception seems to be largely an artefact based on a European view, where Acanthaceae are few (three species native fide Heywood (1972)) and Labiatae numerous (41 genera and c. 400_500 species, Heywood & Richardson 1972). In the tropics, particularly in forest regions, but also in other vegetation types, Acanthaceae are well known to prevail over Labiatae in tems of species numbers. It is less widely realised that the Acanthaceae are also extensively used by local people. Taking West Africa as an example, 32 pages are devoted to Acanthaceae and 37 to Labiatae in the Useful Plants of West Tropical Africa (Burkhill 1985, 1995). If pages are any indication, the two families are of comparable economic importance.

This note is devoted to a shy_flowering herb cultivated by virtually every household of the Bakossi tribe in S.W.Cameroon and known to them as 'N'weh', or Bakossi tea. The Bakossi occupy an area of about 40 miles in diameter, centred in the East around the towns of Loum, Bangem and Tombel, but in the West comprising numerous small villages, accessible only by footpaths, in the broken terrain of the Bakossi Mountains. The whole of the tribal area is montane, largely still covered in forest, habitation occurring between c. 500_2000 m altitude. Bakossi tea grows to 1_1.5 m, exceptionally 2 m, tall in small clumps of several stems and appears to reproduce vegetatively by the production of new shoots from an underground rootstock. These are used for propagation by the Bakossi, for flowers and fruits are very rarely seen. A patch of plants is grown near most houses, where they are harvested for use as the need arises. It is unusual to find the species grown on farm plots. The tea is produced from dried or fresh leaves steeped in boiling water, when a red pigment, presumably an anthocyanin, is released in large quantities, though not detectable in the appearance of the live plant. Leaves are usually removed from near the stem apex. The resulting infusion is refreshing, and taken, sometimes with a raw egg mixed in, to restore health if the subject is feeling out_of_sorts. The infusion is also believed to replace blood, or rectify anaemia, perhaps because the infusion resembles blood in colour (that is to say Doctrine of Signatures).

The identity of Bakossi tea had been a mystery. Locating plants in flower took a whole year, despite offers of rewards in two villages, Kupe and Nyasoso, for production of flowering material. It is likely that removal of the stem apex for producing tea inhibits flowering, but this does not explain why unharvested plants so rarely flower. It may be that the cultivated plants are a selection of a vigorous polyploid sterile clone, or again, this may be a species which only flowers, possibly synchronously, at intervals of several years (see ACANTHUS **6**). Flowers were at length discovered near Bangem on 2 December 1995 (Ewang s.n., spirit, K, YA) by Mr Ebong Ewang Emmanuel who was the Chief of Centre, Forestry Dept., Bangem, before being seconded to the Mount Kupe Forest Project, Nyasoso. He found it flowering abundantly in a neglected garden in the Bangem area. The white flowers, c. 7 mm long are held within two elliptic leaflike calyx

lobes produced in abundance from the stem nodes. The specimen was identified at Kew by Dr Vollesen, Acanthaceae specialist, as *Dicliptera laxa* C.B.Clarke. This is a species native to montane forest in Africa, generally occurring at about 1500_2200 m altitude and not well established as being a useful plant. In the Kew herbarium, two specimens are known from N.E. Nigeria, about nine from montane Cameroon, mostly the Bafut_Bamenda area, one from Fernando Po. The species skips the low altitude of the Congo basin and reappears in Kivu, E. Zaire and Burundi and is found in most of the E. African mountains from Ethiopia to Malawi. Of the specimens seen, only one seemed to refer to any use for this species, (*Herbier C.N.A.D. 1735 (K), collected in Dschang, Western Province, Cameroon, i.e. c. 30 miles to the north of Bakossi.)* On the label of this specimen, it is referred to as a domestic herb ('Ntou_lechuet') which is macerated in hot water to produce a blood-like fluid. Evidently the people of that area, the Bamileke, have a similar use for this species, at least on occasion. Generally, the Bakossi believe that only they grow this plant. Certainly we do not know of more southerly tribes, such as the Bakweri, cultivating this species.

It is interesting to note that no wild collections of this species are known from the Bakossi area. While this may indicate insufficient sampling, it may also indicate that the plant is not native to the Bakossi area, but brought in from the Bamenda_Bafut area to the north where most wild collections in Cameroon have been made.

As far as we know, the phamaceutical value of this species has not been scientifically evaluated

Acknowlegements:

We would like to thank Dr Kaj Vollesen (K) for making the specimen identification, Chief Ntoko, Paramount Chief of the Bakossi for appealing to his people to obtain flowering material of Bakossi tea, and Mr Ebong Ewang Emmanuel for collecting and presenting the material. This work was sponsored by Earthwatch Europe with the support of DG VIII of the European Commission.

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Intraspecific Seed Heteromorphism in AcanthaceaeIntraspecific Seed Heteromorphism in Acanthaceae

Thomas F. Daniel
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In my 1983 monograph of the American genus *Carlowrightia* (Flora Neotropica 34: 1—116. 1983), I noted the presence of two different types of seeds in capsules of three North American species of section *Tuberculosperma*: *C. albiflora* T.F. Daniel, *C. parvifolia* Brandegee, and *C. pectinata* Brandegee. Whereas most species of *Carlowrightia* have four seeds in a capsule, those in sections *Tuberculosperma* and *Thyrsiformes* often have only two. I indicated (Daniel 1983: 13) that "in instances where more than two seeds are produced in *C. parvifolia*, *C. albiflora*, and *C. pectinata*, the additional seeds are malformed and probably incapable of germination." I described these "aborted" seeds as smaller and thinner than normally encountered in the species, partially conduplicate with poorly developed ornamentation on the testa, and having large winglike marginal teeth. Subsequently, Daniel and Wasshausen (Nordic J. Bot. 13: 653--656. 1993) described a species of *Carlowrightia* from South America in section *Tuberculosperma* with similar heteromorphic seeds.

In 1984 I obtained seeds of *Carlowrightia pectinata* from a wild population of the species in Sonora, Mexico. Both types of seeds were present, i.e., thicker ones that have well-developed surface ornamentation (fig. 1a, "normal") and thinner ones that are partially conduplicate and strongly pectinate (fig. 1b, "conduplicate-pectinate"). The latter were only found when more than two seeds had developed in a capsule. Germinability of both types of seeds was tested and the results were reported by me in an article in Brittonia (40: 245—255. 1988). Much to my surprise, both types of seed were found to be equally germinable. In addition, plants resulting from "normal" seeds were morphologically and reproductively identical to those resulting from "conduplicate-pectinate" seeds.

Analysis of the number and type(s) of seeds in numerous capsules revealed that the production of different seed types is not random in this species. If only one or two seeds are present, they are invariably of the "normal" type. "Conduplicate-pectinate" seeds are usually only present as third (and fourth) seeds in capsules. I hypothesized that because of the relatively thicker "normal" seeds of species in section *Tuberculosperma* (vs. thinner in other sections of *Carlowrightia*), the production of "conduplicate-pectinate" seeds may result from space limitations in the capsule when more than two seeds are present.

I am not aware of this type of seed heteromorphism in any other genus of Acanthaceae. Hedrén (Acta Univ. Ups. Symb. Bot. Ups. 29(1): 1--141. 1989) noted remarkable heteromorphism in fruits of some taxa in *Justicia* sect. *Harnieria*. He also noted that in at least one species, seeds originating from the different types of fruits were somewhat different. This situation is quite different from that described above for *Carlowrightia*, however, where different types of seeds are produced in the same capsule. I would be grateful to learn of any other instances of seed heteromorphism in the Acanthaceae.

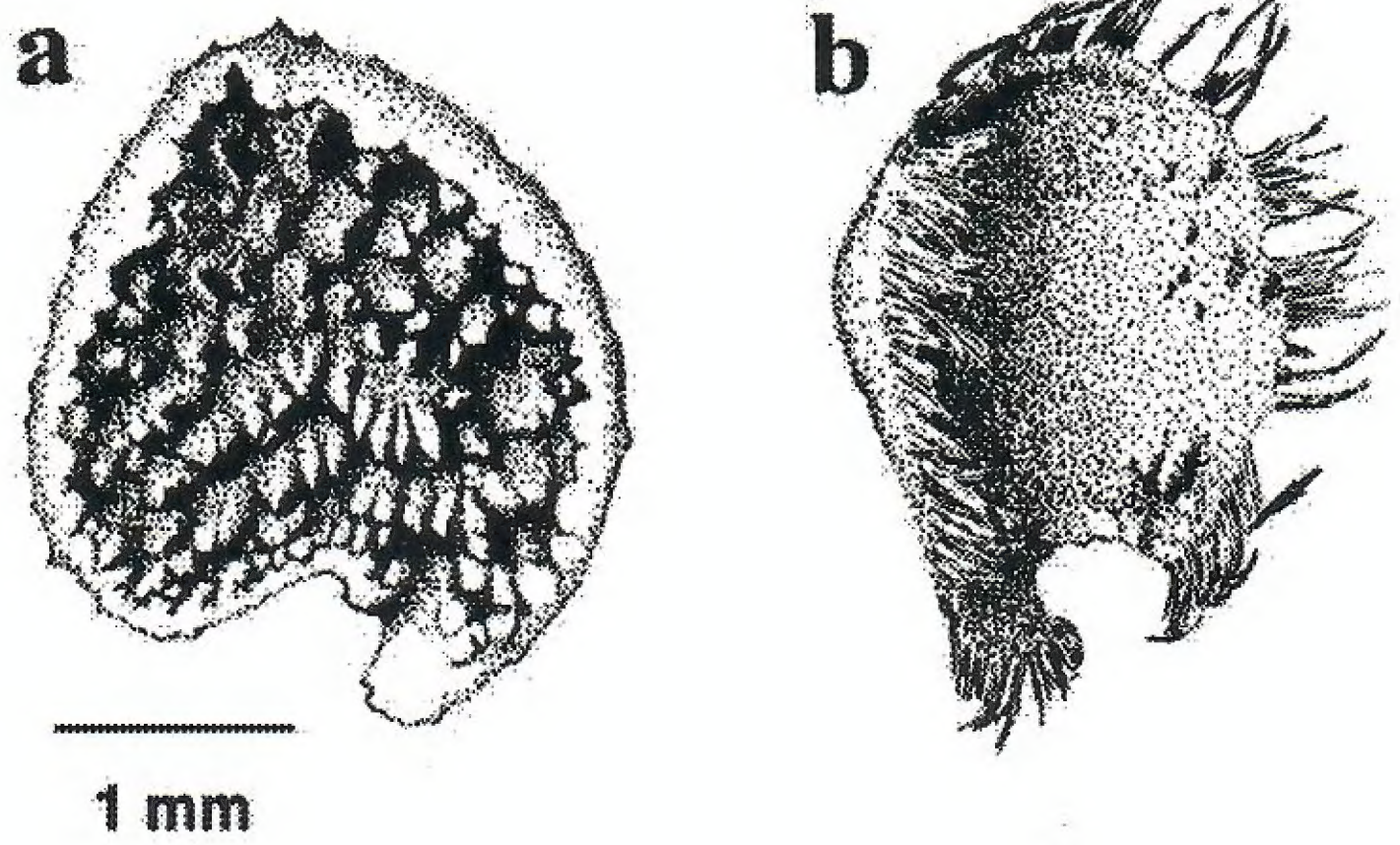

Fig. 1. Seeds of *Carlowrightia pectinata*. a) "normal" seed. b) "conduplicate-pectinate" seed. Drawn by Mary Ann Tenorio and based on Fig. 4 in (Brittonia 40: 254. 1988).

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Upcoming EventsUpcoming Events

International Acanthaceae Conference, South Africa April/May 2002:

At the Acanthaceae lunch held during the International Botanical Congress in St. Louis, Missouri, in August 1999, it was agreed, in principle, at least by those present, to accept the invitation of Kevin and Mandy Balkwill to host an International Acanthaceae Meeting in South Africa. The proposed timing of the conference at that time was Autumn (Southern Hemisphere), 2001. However, correspondence with various acanthologists has shown that time to be unsuitable for various reasons. Therefore, it is proposed to hold the conference in April/May 2002. A formal announcement with fuller details, of the conference will follow in due course. It will comprise 2-3 days of contributed papers, followed by a field trip.

If you have any suggestions for themes for symposia, or for workshops to be associated with the meeting etc..... please send your suggestions to Mandy or Kevin Balkwill

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Acanth Colloquium

Following the tradition begun at the IBC, Tom Daniel and Lucinda McDade (U. Arizona), will organize an Acanthaceae colloquium of a half day of contributed papers at the 2001 meeting of the American Society of Plant Taxonomists. The meeting will be in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in August.

A colloquium, as defined by the ASPT, is a session of contributed papers on a common theme. We will need to identify at least eight speakers to fill one session; contributions of all sorts are invited, from reproductive biology to anatomy and morphology to phylogenetics. We will be in touch with a number of you to request that you participate in this colloquium but do not hesitate to contact us if you will attend and intend to present a paper on Acanthaceae.

If you will be attending this meeting, contact Tom (tdaniel@CalAcademy.org) or Lucinda (mcdade@u.arizona.edu). Further details will follow in subsequent issues of Acanthus or via email notification.